

CARR (W.L.)

*A case of Scorbutus
in an infant.*



CARR (W. L.)

al

A CASE OF Scorbutus in an Infant.¹

By WALTER LESTER CARR, M.D.,
NEW YORK.

Reprinted from the MEDICAL RECORD, October 8, 1892.

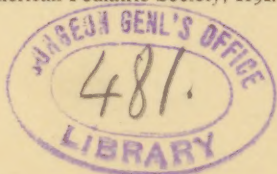
SCORBUTUS in infancy is rare, and it is not always diagnosed when present. That it is found in infants whose parents are able to provide all the necessities of life was shown in the able paper read by our Chairman before the American Pediatric Society.² The history I present is that of an infant, aged fifteen months, to whom the mother, an intelligent woman, gave the food, day after day, which caused the scurvy.

The infant was brought from Paterson, N. J., to the Children's Class at Bellevue Hospital, Out-door Department, and was under the observation of my assistants, Drs. Purdy and Neuhaus; Dr. J. Lewis Smith also saw the case. The mother of the little patient had kept a careful watch of the symptoms, and her narrative is incorporated in the record.

V. R. K——, female, aged fifteen months, first child. The baby was nursed until she was six weeks old, when she was weaned, and fed condensed milk for six weeks

¹ Section on Pediatrics of the New York Academy of Medicine.

² Scorbutus in Infants, American Cases. By William Perry Northrup, M.D. Transactions of the American Pediatric Society, 1891.



longer, after which Mellin's food was used. This seemed to agree with her, though at first she did not like it, and the condensed milk was given in its place from time to time. The first lower incisors showed at eight months; the baby stood and walked with assistance two weeks later. During September, 1891, bowel trouble developed, which continued for some months and weakened the baby very much. The diet was kept the same. In November she refused to stand, and when placed on her feet she would fall. The following month, December, she became irritable, fretful, and did not sleep well. She appeared to have fever. Her legs were tender and sore, and she kept her thighs drawn up on the abdomen. When her clothing was changed she would scream as if in pain. After this condition had lasted about six weeks the baby extended her legs, but did not seem able to use them, although they were not so tender. On the legs were streaks and spots which looked like bruises, and in the centre of some of the purpuric patches were reddish dots that resembled pin pricks.

The movements from the bowels were as frequent as sixteen a day, and varied greatly in appearance. Sometimes the stools were green, then were black, or dark green, and again were natural in color. Often they contained a large quantity of mucus and were streaked with blood.

May 18, 1892, I first saw the baby, and my attention was called to the weakness of her legs. I found her to be a plump infant, with very little muscular strength, and a great deal of tenderness over the body, and especially of the thighs. She evidently experienced pain when handled, and would begin to cry before she was touched. The thighs had a swollen appearance, and were sausage-shaped, with some of the swelling below the knees. The lower third of each femur felt thickened, and the thighs were exquisitely tender. There was not any heat in the parts. The sensation was good, but the muscular power was so weakened that the extremities could not be drawn

up. There were no stainings nor discolorations. The abdomen was soft and distended. The liver and spleen were not enlarged. As the baby cried the gums were seen to be swollen and bleeding, with the teeth half-hidden by the softened alveolar tissue. The tongue was covered with a dirty, yellowish-brown coating, and with blood from the gums.

The anterior fontanelle was as open as is usually observed at fifteen months. Head moist. No cranio-tabes. No marked rachitic changes in epiphyses, or along the edges of the flat bones.

Examination of the chest showed the presence of mucous râles, some of which, at the bases of the lungs, were rather fine ; but there was no dulness. Temperature in the rectum was almost 105° F.

The mother was ordered to stop the condensed milk, and to give the baby fresh milk, beef-juice, and the juice of an orange every day. No medicine, except a placebo, was prescribed.

After the visit of May 18th the baby had measles, accompanied by a severe attack of bronchitis. The high temperature noted was no doubt due to the onset of the acute disease. Under the change in diet the baby had made rapid improvement, and although ill with the measles the gums were better in three days, and normal by the end of a week.

June 21st is recorded : "Baby's general condition good. Some perspiration of the head and body. The muscles are not very strong, and there is a slight curvature of the spine, due to the want of muscular support. There is no tenderness of the thighs. Gums are all right. The stools contain a little mucus."

June 29th. The mother sends word that the baby's bowels are much improved, and that she is gaining in strength and weight. She uses her feet and legs better than she had ever done before the illness.

The history of the case shows that there were not any puzzling symptoms, and the diagnosis was readily made.

I wish to call attention to the two features that were most prominent, and which should be looked for in all cases of the same character. These symptoms were the tumefied bleeding gums, which almost covered the teeth, and the tender, swollen thighs.

6 EAST FIFTY-EIGHTH STREET.

